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Communist China: *Present, But Not All Accounted For*

Two long-absent politburo members—Kang Sheng and Hsieh Fu-chih—suddenly resurfaced last week during Romanian party chief Ceausescu's visit to Peking. Their absence almost certainly was due to political troubles, but it is not yet clear that either man has regained his previous stature or that the jockeying for position within China's uneasy ruling coalition has ended. Indeed, the press treatment accorded the brief reappearance of both men, who appear to represent opposite ends of the political spectrum on the politburo, seemed an unusually contrived attempt by their supporters to demonstrate that neither side has permanently lost ground in the complex behind-the-scenes struggle in Peking between ultraleftists and putative moderate leaders. The actual power of both Kang and Hsieh has diminished considerably over the past year and it is possible that neither man has won full political rehabilitation. In any case, continued rumors that Chen Po-ta—Mao's long-time secretary and China's fourth ranked politburo member—has been purged, the conspicuous absence last week of some other key figures associated with the ultraleftist or more conservative forces, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] all suggest that a number of crosscurrents are roiling the waters in Peking.

Kang Sheng, who ranks fifth in the party hierarchy and who was a leading figure on the extremist side during the Cultural Revolution, was present at a major reception for Ceausescu on 3 June attended by Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao. Kang was listed in his customary place among the regime's top leaders, indicating that he formally retains his position on the elite politburo standing committee. Nevertheless, he failed to participate in substantive talks with the Romanians and did not appear with his colleagues at subsequent receptions.

Also on 3 June, but well after the report that Kang had reappeared, the Chinese press released a remarkable article featuring the call made later that day on the Romanian delegation by Hsieh Fu-chih, his first recorded public appearance in over a year. The article accorded Hsieh all his usual titles, except that of public security minister, and by simply noting that other dignitaries such as Chou En-lai and Madame Mao were also "present on the occasion" gave what amounted to extraordinary billing for Hsieh. Because Hsieh's visit had the appearance of having been hastily contrived and Kang's re-emergence was clearly ceremonial in nature, the whole exercise had the effect of projecting both men as representatives of opposing forces within the elite rather than as powerful figures in their own right. Despite his impressive list of party and governmental positions, for example, Hsieh does not appear to be actually performing any of his varied duties at present.

In a broad sense, much of the maneuvering within the politburo since it was formed two years ago has stemmed from the efforts of ultraleftist ideologues long close to Mao to strengthen their political positions in the face of countervailing moderate pressures. In recent months the political seesaw in Peking has appeared to tip in favor of the moderates, and a concerted effort appears to have been made to thrust one ultraleftist leader, Chen Po-ta, to the political sidelines. Similar efforts have been made since last fall to circumscribe the authority of his colleague Kang Sheng, but he now appears to have gained some sort of reprieve which may be intended by Mao himself to demonstrate that the political seesaw has been tipping too far and that the voices of the left in regime councils are not to be completely silenced.

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In any event, Peking's failure to account for Kang's temporary eclipse and its curious handling of the question of Hsieh Fu-chih's political status attest to the fluidity within the present leadership. Indeed, whether or not the balance of forces

is still shifting rightward or is again in uneasy equilibrium may not be apparent until the leadership again turns out during the celebration of the Chinese Communist party's fiftieth anniversary next month.